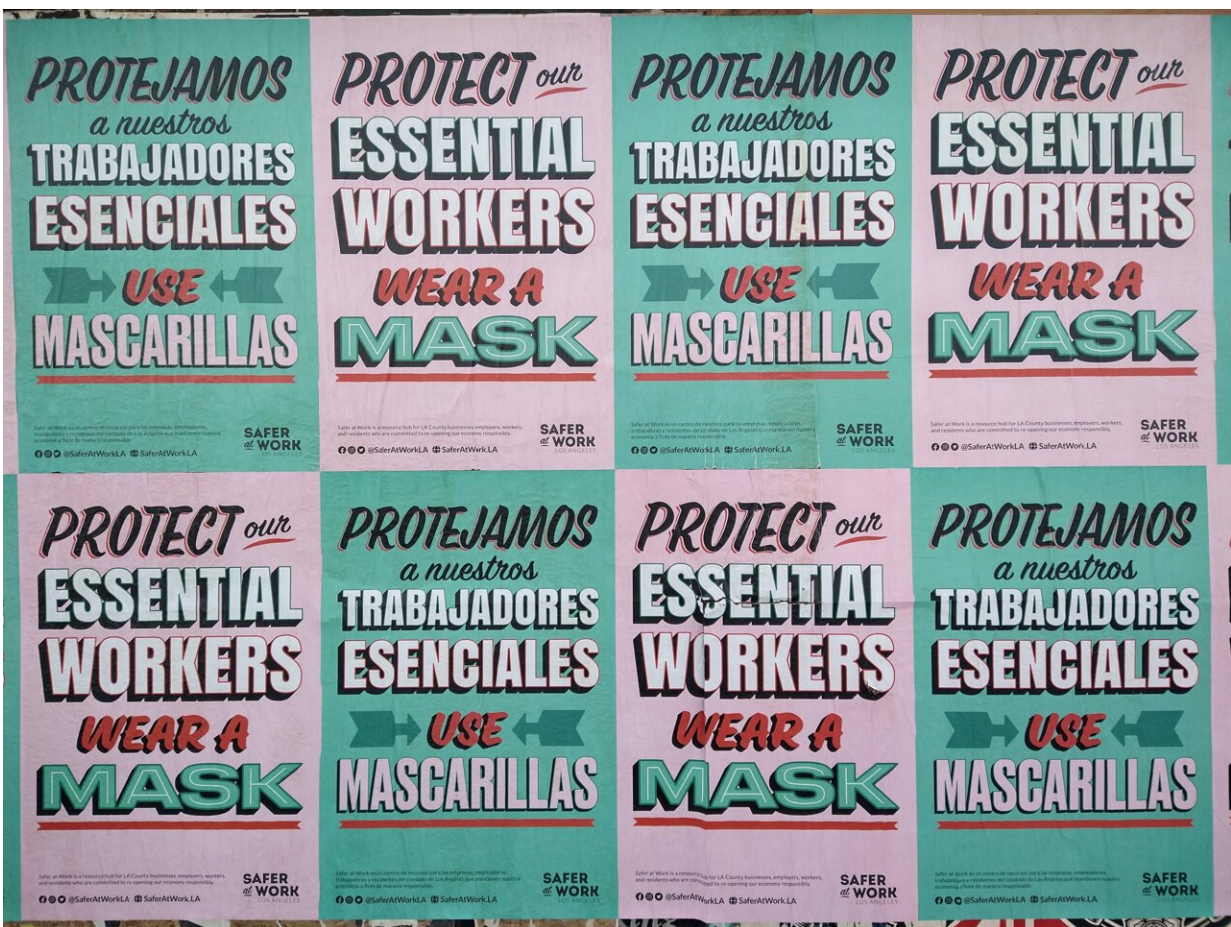


Female essential workers were at 'higher risk' of catching COVID-19 during pandemic, finds Ireland survey

October 12 2023, by David Kearns



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Female essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic were substantially more at risk of contracting the virus according to new research published by UCD in partnership with the Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI).

Based on data from the first findings of the UCD Working in Ireland Survey (2021), [the study](#), "Essential Workers' Experience of Work During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Ireland," found at least 6 in 10 essential workers were subject to a moderate or a high level of risk of being infected with COVID-19 in the workplace.

Among this number, female workers were at a greater risk than their male colleagues.

The research was carried out by Professor John Geary, UCD College of Business, Assistant Professor Maria Belizon, a Visiting Research Fellow at UCD, and Paul MacFlynn, co-director of NERI.

The study also found that women were marginally more likely to have raised concerns with their employers about the risk of getting COVID-19, and were less likely to believe those concerns had been fully addressed.

Some 45% of women in roles that were exempted from pandemic restrictions between March 2020 and May 2021 in sectors including health care, [public administration](#) and transport believed they were at high risk of getting the virus in their workplace compared to 28% of men.

In all, almost 7 in 10 essential workers voiced their worries about contracting the virus to management during the period of the pandemic when they were required to attend work outside of their homes.

"I think the great paradox here is that the challenges faced by many of those who were obliged to work from home have received a great deal of attention since the pandemic ended and some are now being addressed by legislation in relation to issues like the right to disconnect," said Professor Geary, speaking to the *Irish Times*.

"That has not been the case in relation to the essential workers who kept on having to go out to work. In a sense they are the forgotten orphan of the pandemic. I think that's in large part because we haven't had a review, or a public inquiry, as they are having in the U.K. at the moment, which looks at how we managed our response to COVID."

The study looked at work performed by nurses, doctors, care staff, retail staff and other essential workers during the [pandemic](#), and examined the risks encountered by workers in contracting COVID-19 while at work, the demands placed upon them, and the consequences for their health.

It found that the well-being of essential workers were substantially impaired, with many reporting pronounced levels of anxiety—especially [female workers](#), who were particularly prominent in hospitals, [care homes](#) and other health care settings.

More information: Essential Workers' Experience of Work During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Ireland. [www.nerinstitute.net/research/ ... d-first-findings-ucd](http://www.nerinstitute.net/research/...d-first-findings-ucd)

Provided by University College Dublin

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